

9617 Wyoming Circle  
Bloomington, MN 55438

April 2, 2016

Michael Centinario  
City of Bloomington Planning Division  
1800 W. Old Shakopee Rd.  
Bloomington, MN 55431

Dear Mr. Centinario:

The purpose of this application is to request a variance in response to Ordinance 19.08 and 21.301.19. The ordinance implies that our tree house is located in our "front" yard.

We built our tree house in 2012, so it has been in our yard for the past four years. When we built the tree house, we assumed its location was our side yard. Only when we received the citation, were we made aware that the location could potentially be a "second front yard."

Given the unusual placement of our lot and our house, the current location is the only reasonable location for the structure. First, in the rear of our yard, a deck extends out 14 feet from the house and there is a gazebo in the backyard surrounded by a brick walkway. Placing the structure between the deck and the gazebo would not only restrict access to the gazebo, but it would also present significant safety hazards for the children. Second, moving the structure slightly south introduces other safety hazards such as the slope of the yard and a large boulder retaining wall. Finally, as a matter of practicality, this is a tree house. The only tree in our yard that is suitable for a tree house, is the one in which it resides currently.

The structure is not intended to be permanent. Once our children are older, we plan to dismantle the tree house and adjacent swing set. Furthermore, our lot is located at the end of a cul-de-sac. There is no thru traffic; the only traffic on our street is residents and visitors. Furthermore, until October 2014, a large evergreen tree completely concealed the tree house on the north. Unfortunately, the tree died and needed to be removed. However, we are amenable to replacing the tree to again conceal the tree house from the street. The other sides of the tree house are completely concealed by trees.

Our tree house has become a central gathering place for the children in our neighborhood. All are welcome and encouraged to play here. It has fostered creativity, imagination, friendships and community. As the children play, the parents have formed friendships and strengthened the sense of community in our

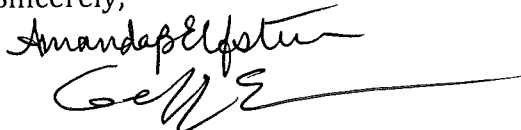
neighborhood. These are all attributes the City of Bloomington should not only support, but also encourage.

Our next door neighbors, Dan and Jill Bickett, to whom the tree house is most visible, are perhaps the strongest proponents of keeping the structure where it is. The location allows Dan and Jill to supervise their children from their own front yard or even inside their home. Their three children who are 9, 7 and 3 years old respectively, play on the structure almost on a daily basis. In fact, when the Bicketts moved to the neighborhood in 2013, they stated that the tree house was one of the elements they liked best. It signified that ours was a family friendly neighborhood.

As you can see from the accompanying letters and petition, our neighbors are in strong support of the tree house remaining in its current location. Everyone we spoke to about the citation were shocked and upset by the news. Several of the children even sold lemonade to raise money to help offset the cost of this process.

In summary, the families in our neighborhood, Geoff and I hope you will approve the variance, so our children can continue to enjoy the tree house and foster their imaginations and friendships. Again, we agree to remove the structure once the children are older, and conceal the tree house in the meantime by replacing the tree that was removed last year.

Sincerely,

The block contains two handwritten signatures. The first signature is for Amanda Elfstrum, written in a cursive script. The second signature is for Geoff Elfstrum, also in cursive, and is longer and more stylized than the first.

Amanda Elfstrum  
Geoff Elfstrum